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Report on the mid-term review of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (2002-2005)

Summary

Following the Executive Director's annual report (E/ICEF/2004/9), which analysed progress in the second year of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2002-2005, the present report presents the major findings of a wide-ranging mid-term review of the MTSP which was undertaken in the first half of 2004. It summarizes the views of external partners and UNICEF field offices on experience of the MTSP so far; discusses key issues which have increased in prominence since the plan was formulated; assesses organizational performance and lessons learned in the five priority areas and supporting strategies of the plan; and presents proposed adjustments to the current MTSP and implications for the next one.

This report is complemented by reports on the updated humanitarian priorities of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2004/14) and the analysis of the utilization of regular and other resources (E/ICEF/2004/16).

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I. Introduction

1. The UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2002-2005 (E/ICEF/2001/13 and Corr.1) was approved by the Executive Board in its decision 2001/22 (E/ICEF/2001/6) as a flexible framework for UNICEF action covering the period 2002-2005, which reaffirms the centrality of the UNICEF country programming approach, recognizing national ownership in the process and which is a contribution to the achievement of the final declaration of the General Assembly Special Session on Children, the Millennium Declaration and relevant international development targets. The Board approved the five organizational priorities of the plan, taking each country's situation into account, and requested the Executive Director, on an ongoing basis, to review and where necessary propose adjustments to the MTSP based on the comments made by Board members, as reflected in the reports on its sessions, the results of the Special Session on Children, and experience in implementing the plan. The plan itself included a provision for a mid-term review (MTR) of its implementation (E/ICEF/2001/13, para. 176), so that lessons learned from the review would inform the development of the next MTSP.

2. The MTSP aims to better focus the work of the organization and to define its "niches of excellence" in support of national priorities. It seeks to do this through providing a common guiding framework for the entire organization. It also aims to strengthen the connectivity of all levels of UNICEF, including between the MTSP and individual UNICEF-assisted country programmes, in an iterative and flexible fashion.

3. It was recognized that it would inevitably take time to achieve major gains in focus and connectivity, since country programmes normally are implemented on a five-year cycle which is harmonized with those of other United Nations agencies. The main opportunities for changes of direction arise with the preparation of a new programme of cooperation and in the MTR of an ongoing one.

4. The MTSP further aims to improve the performance of UNICEF as an organization that makes effective use of resources in cooperating for planned results, and which reports clearly on those results while learning from experience. It aims to encourage UNICEF to leverage resources and actions in favour of children, through the use of information, communication, advocacy and an emphasis on strategic partnerships.

5. Major shifts in the international context have taken place since the MTSP was approved in 2001 and need to be considered. These include: the further rise to prominence of security concerns and emergencies; the continuing spread of the AIDS epidemic and its effects; a range of United Nations simplification and harmonization initiatives; and other reform measures introduced by the Secretary-General, including the strengthening of the work of the United Nations system in support of human rights.

II. The mid-term review of the plan

6. The MTR was designed to obtain a wide-range of views of the MTSP, and experience in its implementation, without incurring excessive costs. The main components were: (a) standard questionnaires completed by a sample of 23 country offices and seven regional offices; (b) standard questionnaires completed by

members of the Executive Board (24 responded) and National Committees for UNICEF; (c) inputs from a broad-based reference group of country, regional and headquarters staff; (d) external evaluations of the UNICEF role in and contributions to United Nations reform; and (e) performance reviews of each of the priority areas of the MTSP. Initial findings from the above activities were developed further by the reference group in the final stages of the review. Other studies and databases were also used.

A. External views of the plan

7. In their responses to the questionnaire survey carried out as part of the MTR, members of the Executive Board generally described the current MTSP as a major achievement and a very important tool for bringing coherence, efficiency and credibility to the work of UNICEF. Through the MTSP, UNICEF is seen to have promoted dynamism in its operations and its performance for children. They noted their appreciation that UNICEF is now focusing on five major areas of work and indicated that the MTSP has helped to clarify expectations of the organization. They noted that the clearer definition of targets, indicators and strategies for a limited number of priorities has provided greater focus to UNICEF activities. The framework of results-based management and the human rights-based approach to programming, along with the strengthening of the evaluation function, have led to positive organization-wide change.

8. Board members indicated areas where they would appreciate more explicit information in the context of UNICEF strategic planning. These included the role of UNICEF within the United Nations family, and how child-related issues that emerge at country level beyond the immediate scope of the MTSP are addressed. Areas cited for future improvement included: reporting of financial data and analysis; reporting on how UNICEF plans for its participation in the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) and sector-wide approach (SWAp) processes; and better definition of baseline data and targets for organizational effectiveness.

9. In terms of the priority areas of the plan, integrated early childhood development (IECD) was considered to require additional clarification and perhaps reformulation, particularly in terms of measurable indicators and strategic areas of intervention. In this context, it was suggested that breastfeeding and water and sanitation receive higher prominence in the future. The IECD approach should not obscure results achieved in sectoral programmes and its emphasis on support to families should be strengthened. Many members noted the importance of fighting HIV/AIDS and some encouraged UNICEF to focus more on prevention activities, as well as on assistance to children and their families affected by the epidemic. It was widely felt that the child protection priority requires more measurable indicators in order to assess the UNICEF contributions in this area. It was suggested that, in addition to advocacy work in support of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, greater focus be considered on promoting child participation.

10. It was generally indicated that only minor adjustments should be made to the current MTSP, in view of the limited time remaining. While Board members expected some improvements in the next MTSP and clearer alignment of its targets to the Millennium Development Goals, they also indicated that the general direction

of the current plan should be maintained and built upon. The MTSP should retain its simple structure, flexibility, close linkage with international development frameworks and commitment to programming based on national ownership. It should also build upon lessons gained in the use of a human-rights based approach to programming. As will be seen, these views corresponded closely to those of UNICEF field staff who participated in the MTR.

11. The National Committees for UNICEF were also consulted, with 16 responding. One half of them found the MTSP to be significantly different from previous plans, with a large majority indicating that it had helped them in communicating the priorities of UNICEF to the public. However, success in fund-raising has varied between the priority areas, with some difficulties encountered in presenting IECD. Several Committees said that UNICEF work in emergencies and in water and sanitation was not sufficiently reflected in the plan. Some noted that their advocacy work would be assisted if the linkages of the MTSP priorities with the Millennium Declaration and Goals were clearer.

12. For the next plan, they also said that dramatic changes should be avoided, given that many targets will not have been achieved by 2005 and in view of the organizational changes which would be involved. The priorities and targets of the plan should be designed as far as possible to facilitate the clear demonstration of results.

B. The medium-term strategic plan, the Millennium Agenda and Millennium Development Goals

13. The agenda adopted at the 2000 Millennium Summit is highly focused on children. The Millennium Declaration itself contains extensive commitments for children, including for protecting the vulnerable. In these respects, the Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals reflect the obligations mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the Special Session on Children, the General Assembly reconfirmed many of the existing international commitments made to children and developed a set of interim targets for progress, including for improved child protection.

14. The MTSP represents the UNICEF "business plan" to provide support to this Millennium Agenda and the associated commitments of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Special Session on Children. Although it was designed while the targets and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals were still being detailed, the MTSP was able to specify the components of the agenda to which its priority areas would contribute (see annex I of E/ICEF/2001/13). Six of the eight Goals which were adopted on the basis of the Millennium Declaration directly concern children's lives, as do many of the targets and indicators developed for these goals. Three of the five MTSP priorities correspond directly to individual Millennial Goals in the areas of primary education, gender equality and combating AIDS and other major diseases. The child protection priority represents an important UNICEF contribution to the national fulfilment of the Millennium Declaration as well as helping to address major factors, such as child labour and violence, which affect progress towards the Millennial Goals.

15. The MTR also noted that many additional links between the plan priorities and the Millennial Goals have become clearer in practice, for example, between the

education of girls and the goals for eliminating extreme poverty and combating HIV/AIDS.

16. The review concluded that the strong contributions which UNICEF is making to the Millennial Goals have been to some extent obscured by terminology used in the MTSP. In particular, while this is not immediately clear from its title and structure, the MTSP priorities of immunization "plus" and IFCD are intended to make a direct and measurable contribution to the Millennial Goals of reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health and increased access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The structure and targets of the next MTSP should take greater account of the need for UNICEF to communicate and demonstrate its contributions to the wider partnership efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals, and its support to the national implementation of the Millennium Declaration and other commitments to children.

C. United Nations reform and UNICEF

17. As an input to the MTR, UNICEF commissioned a two-part external evaluation of its contribution to the United Nations reform process and the impact on UNICEF, focusing on reform under the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and in the humanitarian sector.[1] The findings showed that key external informants were impressed by the extent to which UNICEF has supported and participated in reform efforts, despite an initial reticence towards some aspects of reforms under the UNDG. By contrast, UNICEF has been stronger and more proactive in leading reform efforts in the humanitarian sector, dating back to 1991. The evaluation concludes that UNICEF engagement in the reform process in the development sphere can be expected to "catch up", given more time.

18. In both the development and humanitarian spheres, the evaluation noted some external criticism of UNICEF over its eagerness to protect its identity as an independent agency: its independent representation and ability to advocate for children directly with high levels of government; the accountability of its representatives to the Executive Director; and its ability to raise resources from non-governmental sources including National Committees. In the humanitarian sphere, a tension was noted between donors' demands for harmonization within the United Nations and the ability of UNICEF to advocate visibly and strongly for the rights of children. There were also concerns among staff that at this stage in the reform process, there had been more harmonization than simplification.

19. Despite these concerns, there is broad agreement that UNICEF has made a large and lasting contribution to the United Nations reform effort. Key contributions prior to and during the current MTSP period have included: staff secondments at senior levels with inter-agency and United Nations reform responsibilities; high-quality service on a wide range of inter-agency working groups; conceptual and practical inputs to such strategic planning instruments as the Common Country

[1] The two evaluations involved document reviews, over 100 interviews with both UNICEF and key external informants, a questionnaire for 16 country offices in the context of the Common Country Assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the examination of four country cases in the humanitarian context and consultations with field and headquarters reference groups. The evaluations were commissioned by the Evaluation Office to ensure their independence.

Assessment (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the Consolidated Appeals Process and contingency planning, and to humanitarian policies in the areas of civil-military interface, gender mainstreaming, sexual violence and exploitation; and support to the harmonization of personnel policies and to the United Nations security system. Contributions to strengthen the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator system were noted, although these were balanced by criticisms of the comparatively low levels of staff participation.

20. The evaluation pointed to the instrumental role that UNICEF has played in the development of policy and standards for a human rights-based approach to programming, linked with the evolution of UNICEF experience in this area. At the same time, there is still need for better guidance on the practical application of these approaches in humanitarian contexts and a more consistent and forceful advocacy for children's rights, within United Nations country teams and the United Nations system globally.

21. UNICEF is also seen as having contributed to reform efforts around countries in transition from emergencies to development cooperation, providing leadership in the UNDG/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs working group on transition. The evaluation points to transition as an area where UNICEF should expand its role, given its long-term presence, its range of partnerships with government, civil society and non-state actors and its focus on human rights-based approaches and on education within humanitarian response.

22. In terms of the impact on programming, the evaluation points to a strong consistency between the direction of United Nations reform and the UNICEF mission and mandate. It suggests that UNICEF has used both the broader reform process and country-level programming tools to further children's rights and the priority areas of the MTSP. In the humanitarian sphere, UNICEF has used its leadership and support for inter-agency coordination to position itself as a major actor alongside agencies with much larger humanitarian budgets. Overall, the evaluation suggests that the UNICEF role in supporting United Nations reform is vital to UNICEF efforts to promote and protect children's rights.

23. The evaluation made a number of recommendations on elements of future strategy including the scale and focus of effort, supporting partnerships, management issues and critical areas for further development of internal policy and guidance. A management position is being developed to address the evaluation's findings. UNICEF intends for the next MTSP to establish a clear vision and strategy for engagement with United Nations reform and for how the reform process should work in favour of children and women.

D. The plan and situations of crisis and instability

24. Explicit references in the MTSP to situations of emergency were limited, despite the fact that some 20-30 per cent of UNICEF funding is spent in countries in crisis. The findings of the review suggest that the plan's principle of mainstreaming emergency operations may have assisted UNICEF to some extent in increasing the consistency of its cooperation. In particular, the use of the framework provided by the five priorities may have helped to increase the attention given to HIV/AIDS prevention, child protection and maintaining access to education in both emergencies and post-crisis transitions, including in the framework of some United

Nations Consolidated Appeals. On the other hand, UNICEF offices in emergency-affected countries have tended to find inadequate strategic guidance in the MTSP for programme planning in these situations.

25. The updated UNICEF humanitarian strategy and Core Corporate Commitments (CCCs) for children in emergencies, which are being presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session of 2004 (E/ICEF/2004/14), provide a firmer basis for the design of targets within the UNICEF priority areas which will indicate its intentions for response in situations of crisis. It is therefore envisaged that the updated CCCs will be reflected explicitly in the targets and strategic interventions to be established in the next MTSP.

E. Use and implementation of the plan

26. The majority of the current UNICEF-assisted country programmes were approved before the formal adoption of the MTSP. Despite this, the MTR found that the plan, even during its development in 2001, had helped to sharpen the focus of UNICEF cooperation and had provided an essential platform for forging consensus on priorities with national partners. In many cases, the MTSP priorities were taken into account during the preparation of new country programmes or the MTRs of existing ones, in the context of national priorities and conditions. UNICEF offices indicated that the plan has had the most catalytic effect in the areas of fighting HIV/AIDS and child protection, where a considerable number of new initiatives have been developed since 2001.

27. The review also found that the identification of regional emphases within the plan has promoted flexibility and relevance in the UNICEF response. However, in most cases the specific regional emphases requires a more rigorous framework for results.

28. UNICEF offices reported that promoting linkages among priority interventions for children, as envisaged by the MTSP, was challenging in the context of sector-based structures. However, the MTR also found that a wide variety of programme approaches had been used for linking the MTSP priorities, including: collaboration with local authorities; convergence through schools, health facilities and community groups; and the promotion of cross-sectoral considerations in social policy. Such approaches were seen as having improved effectiveness and to have demonstrated capacity for innovation.

29. UNICEF field offices participating in the review saw immunization "plus" and child protection as the areas where greatest advances for children and women had been made since 2001, followed by girls' education. Nearly one half of the offices said that IECD was the area of least impact, which was attributed to its newness and relative complexity. A survey of all UNICEF offices suggested that, among the five MTSP priorities, immunization "plus" and fighting HIV/AIDS have been accorded the highest level of importance by national partners and that immunization "plus" has seen the strongest implementation.

30. The MTR confirmed that success in promoting an MTSP priority and seeing tangible results is closely related to the importance attributed by national partners. Progress during the MTSP period has very often depended on the existence or development of a national policy or investment framework.

F. Monitoring and reporting on the plan

31. The MTSP was adopted without a detailed monitoring system that would provide a firm basis for progress assessment and reporting on strategies and targets. A number of indicators were included in the plan, but many of these were previously untested or poorly specified. To initiate a response to this gap, annual reporting at all levels of UNICEF was restructured in 2002. A series of country-level progress and results matrices were introduced for reporting on the MTSP priorities, including standard monitoring questions which can be aggregated at the global level. Programme coding was revised in 2001 as a basis for aggregate expenditure reporting on the plan priorities.

32. Despite these improvements, weaknesses remain which will need to be addressed in the next MTSP. Some targets are not yet formulated in ways which facilitate direct assessment of progress. Reporting on some indicators will only be possible following the mid-decade round of household surveys. On the other hand, some of the targets for fighting HIV/AIDS and child protection were more focused on internal mobilization than on programmatic results and do not now appear ambitious enough.

III. Performance in the plan's priority areas

A. Girls' education

33. The MTR found broad agreement that the girls' education priority of the MTSP is conceptually clear and that the core interventions are broad enough to allow for country-specific adaptations and actions. The targets and messages of this priority have given UNICEF both visibility and authority. Work in this area received a major boost in 2002 with the development of a strategy for accelerating progress in girls' education. Many UNICEF offices have reported overall increases in girls' enrolment, and that UNICEF-assisted interventions have been making a difference in the quality of the school environment for both girls and boys, through the provision of water and sanitation, gender training of teachers and efforts to address health issues and life skills in curricula.

34. The most significant change at the global level has been the clearer positioning of UNICEF as a major player in the movement to achieve Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals. UNICEF is regarded as a leader in girls' education on the basis of its cooperation and contributions to programmes, as well as in terms of its leadership and coordinating role in the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. The initiative has further developed its partnerships during the MTSP period and is now working with a wide range of international agencies and civil society organizations. The broadening range of partnership networks also includes the EFA movement led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the EFA Fast Track Initiative led by the World Bank.

35. The role of UNICEF as an advocate and catalyst for girls' education is most evident where gender disparities in primary education are wide. While experiences vary, joint planning by United Nations partners in the context of the UNDAF is helping to promote girls' education. SWAps in education are increasingly the channel of choice for scaling-up innovations.

36. UNICEF has deployed its comparative advantages in supporting education in emergency situations and has acted as a lead agency in Afghanistan, Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro), Liberia and Timor-Leste. Its support has focused on the provision of classroom resources and educational materials, teacher training and the development of non-formal approaches. Back-to-school campaigns are now a "signature" intervention for UNICEF in such situations, most recently in Iraq.

Organizational response

37. The share of UNICEF programme expenditure for girls' education increased from 15 per cent in 2001 to 19 per cent in 2003 (see table 2 below), and girls' education received nearly one quarter of regular resources programme spending in 2003. Initial steps have been taken to develop the new competencies required by UNICEF staff to promote partnerships and leverage resources, develop programmes which are gender-aware and support national sector planning where required. In view of these changing roles, a more comprehensive staff development programme is needed for this priority.

38. Major communication initiatives have been used to support this area during the MTSP period, especially the "25 by 2005" global campaign linked to the acceleration strategy. The increased emphasis upon evidence-based advocacy has been a major contributing factor to the performance of UNICEF. The three main messages — that girls' education is a human rights issue, is urgent and is a development imperative — have contributed to sustained communication impact.

39. In all regions, efforts have been made to improve the collection of disaggregated data, to sharpen analysis through gender reviews of education and to improve the use of results-based programming. Key lessons include the need for capacity-building for evaluation and more attention to the monitoring of programme outcomes and impact. The costs of new interventions supported by UNICEF also need to be assessed, in order to provide a credible basis for bringing these to scale.

40. The volume of education supplies procured by UNICEF has increased rapidly during the MTSP period. School-in-a-box and recreation kits have been standardized, while long-term agreements and pre-positioning have shortened delivery times and saved transportation costs.

Conclusions

41. UNICEF benefits from strong donor confidence as a lead agency in girls' education with the capacity to work at both community and policy levels. UNICEF-assisted programmes have been able to advance the human rights-based approach, reaching children normally underserved. However, as reported in the Executive Director' annual report (E/ICEF/2004/9), additional efforts are needed to strengthen the "child-friendly" schools model and to move beyond school-based interventions to approaches that address systemic issues. The engagement of UNICEF in education sectoral reform programmes should be further strengthened. Linkages should be increased with early learning initiatives and further attention should be given to children with disabilities and to child labour and its effects on school attendance.

42. The MTR has identified the need to broaden this priority area to give greater focus to quality education and to address a wider range of equity concerns. The

approach would continue to focus strongly on girls and gender issues, but would enable other groups of excluded children and other factors which lead to disparities to receive emphasis where necessary. Issues pertaining to the quality of education, which are pivotal for sustained progress in both enrolment and learning achievement, should be addressed through a more consolidated set of interventions. Related issues to be considered in the next plan period include greater attention to teacher education and institutional management, governance and community participation, and educational opportunities for adolescents and youth.

43. The findings of the MTR will be used to redesigning this priority for the next plan. Meanwhile, the existing core intervention areas are considered to remain valid, including the emphasis on acceleration and back-to-school initiatives in situations of low enrolment. For the remainder of this plan period, the commitments in emergencies and support to education SWAps will be strengthened, as will the emphasis on promoting water and sanitation in schools and school health and nutrition. The emphasis on girls will also be maintained but the focus will be on a wider range of excluded populations. It is intended to make minor modifications to the indicators used for MTSP target 1 on education access, while the measurement of target 2 related to education quality will be further reviewed.

B. Immunization "plus"

44. The MTR found that the immunization "plus" priority has benefited from a strong strategic framework for action, which has contributed to bringing immunization back onto the national leadership agenda. By the end of 2003, some 85 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had a multi-year plan for reaching immunization goals. UNICEF, with other partners in the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), has also supported in the preparation of national financial sustainability plans and provided extensive support to National Immunization Days. Despite these efforts, the polio eradication initiative has suffered setbacks in a few countries, and although existing strategies for eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus are effective, performance has suffered from limited financial support.

45. In 2002, UNICEF alerted the Executive Board to a worldwide shortage of vaccines. UNICEF has identified three basic components to enhance vaccine security: accurate forecasting of vaccine demand from countries; assured long-term funding to cover purchases; and firm contracts with manufacturers. UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other GAVI partners, has made significant progress in forecasting demand and securing funding through the Vaccine Security initiative. The linkages between global immunization and micronutrient initiatives are also strengthening, and UNICEF plays a leadership role in partnerships with the private sector for salt iodization and vitamin A supply management.

46. UNICEF, together with partners including WHO, Columbia University, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has clarified the immunization response needed in crisis situations. The revised CCCs now include a focus on reaching children in emergencies with measles vaccination and vitamin A supplements.

Organizational response

47. Since the beginning of the MTSP period, overall expenditure in immunization "plus" has shown a modest increase, from $234 million in 2001 to $260 million in 2003. Two thirds of the expenditures in 2003 were for accelerated disease control programmes. Other resources expenditures rose to $217 million in 2003, reflecting the growth of immunization activities in Iraq and measles campaigns in sub-Saharan Africa.

48. UNICEF has invested substantially in rebuilding its human resource (HR) capacity for immunization "plus", with over 150 Professional staff compared to around 100 in 2001. However, the sustainability of this investment is of great concern. Due to limited funding, many technical staff are on short-term contracts.

49. UNICEF provides national immunization coverage estimates each year using the WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Form on Vaccine-Preventable Diseases. This tool provides progress information on a core set of indicators developed in partnership with GAVI. UNICEF and WHO have agreed that, starting with 2003 data, UNICEF will publish the best available immunization estimates.

Conclusions

50. UNICEF continues to have a strong comparative advantage in supporting immunization programmes. As reported in the Executive Director's report (E/ICEF/2004/9), campaigns and related communication efforts have made good progress in reaching children in marginalized families. However, more focus is needed on coverage and sustainability in routine programmes, including through stronger linkages with national health system planning, budgeting, financing and monitoring. The GAVI partnership will remain important for immunization efforts, including for improving access to vaccines among the world's poorest countries. UNICEF will also continue to advocate for secure long-term supplies of basic and underused vaccines, auto-disable syringes and vitamin A.

51. Although immunization often provides the most frequent contact between poor children and the health system, the potential of immunization-related services has not yet been fully utilized for the delivery of other essential interventions. The MTR found that the "plus" side of the priority has been difficult to operationalize. For strategic planning purposes, the delinking of such interventions as vitamin A supplementation may need to be considered. However, for greater overall coherence, the next MTSP should consider combining immunization with other critical interventions for child survival (Millennium Development Goal 4).

52. The immunization "plus" targets and strategies are seen to be valid for the remainder of the MTSP period. The main factor currently affecting progress is inadequate funding, especially for routine activities. A new global strategy for immunization, which is currently being developed jointly with WHO and other partners, will provide an important framework for the future work of UNICEF in this area.

C. Integrated early childhood development

53. The IECD priority encompasses most of UNICEF work in the areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, early childhood education and some activities in

child protection. It was designed to take account of the mounting evidence for the synergistic effects of health, nutrition and early learning interventions and the key role of family care practices for child survival, growth and development. Some UNICEF field offices have emphasized the usefulness of IECD in focusing on the rights of the young child in a holistic way. However, the MTR found that most offices have encountered difficulties in promoting integrated services for children and intersectoral coordination strategies.

54. The IECD priority is consistent with the global agenda established in the Millennium Development Goals and by the Special Session on Children, and involves a strategic approach to programmes for young children, rather than a programme in itself. The extent of integration sought by the MTSP was not well defined. The approach has been applied in various ways, including efforts to promote convergence in particular geographical areas. Some field experience suggests that the best approach to programming for young children may be sequential, building on the work of leading interventions and institutions. Approaches have tended to be more successful where there is a high degree of decentralization or a focus on highly disadvantaged children. In some countries, partnerships are being forged around PRSPs and SWAps with an explicit emphasis on early childhood, in line with the relevant Millennial Goals.

55. Analysis of country programme documents approved by the Executive Board since the start of the MTSP period suggests that the key change which the IECD priority has brought about is a much stronger focus on family and community care practices. Parenting and childcare have received particular attention in middle-income regions while basic service delivery has continued to receive high priority in sub-Saharan Africa. Sectoral programmes have become more consistent in their focus on caregivers. Many more UNICEF-supported programmes now include a focus on early learning. Positive outcomes from these efforts include increased attention to child development and to the role of fathers.

56. Key achievements in the area of **health** include new guidelines for the prevention and treatment of malaria, diarrhoea and pneumonia, all aimed at improving care at the local level. A new formula for oral rehydration salts was developed and will be paired with zinc tablets to reduce the severity and re-occurrence of diarrhoea. In West and Central Africa, the accelerated child survival and development approach has helped to extend health services, using a mix of delivery strategies. Some 80 countries have adopted a community approach to improve child-care practices in the home through the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) initiative. Sixteen countries in Africa and Asia have undertaken needs assessments in maternal health, and all South Asian countries have UNICEF-assisted programmes to improve these services.

57. In **nutrition**, while the infant and young child feeding and care strategy has proven effective in health systems and communities, only a few countries have implemented the full approach. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding among children less than six months old is about 39 per cent, and it is unlikely that the MTSP target of 60 per cent will be met. Household use of iodized salt has increased and, based on revised estimates, now stands at 66 per cent in developing countries. Iron deficiency reduction initiatives have not yet been as successful, but new fortification strategies may help.

58. In **water and environmental sanitation** (WES), there has been a significant shift of emphasis towards promotion of hygiene and sanitation, with continuing but more strategic interventions for improved water supplies. There is now much more focus on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, in support of the targets for girls' education. The improvement of water quality has received increased attention in many countries, and support to arsenic detection and mitigation has expanded. UNICEF has provided support for clean water and sanitation in emergencies in 30-40 countries annually and frequently serves as the designated focal agency for emergency WES response.

59. There has been progress in policy development for **early learning** and the design of indicators and monitoring systems for child development is underway in pilot countries. Family psychosocial care practices are being promoted by a series of efforts in parent education and communication. The IECD priority has also helped to some extent to focus attention on interventions for the early detection and rehabilitation of children with disabilities.

60. There have been innovative efforts to integrate the **birth registration** component with other aspects of IECD and with immunization, but in a limited number of countries.

61. Relatively few countries have attempted to apply convergent approaches for young children in the context of acute emergencies. Some countries have been successful in experimenting with psychosocial recovery and rehabilitation initiatives for young children affected by war in "child-friendly" spaces.

Organizational response

62. Since the initiation of the MTSP, some two thirds of UNICEF expenditure under IECD have supported the delivery of basic services and a further one quarter has promoted family and community care practices. Overall funding has exceeded the MTSP targets, but IECD has not received thematic contributions and the initial emphasis of UNICEF communication possibly created an erroneous impression that the organization was placing less importance on actions in child health, nutrition and WES.

63. The approach relies heavily on the promotion of behavioural development, particularly for influencing family care practices. There are some countries where UNICEF-supported communication is considered to have had a significant impact. However, the MTR found that technical support to countries on communication strategies has not been sufficient during the MTSP period so far.

64. The IECD priority lacks indicators for convergence and integration, and an agreed composite indicator such as school readiness. While progress has been made in monitoring programme and process indicators, the identified impact-level indicators will show trends only on the basis of periodic household surveys.

65. UNICEF operational guidance envisaged a multidisciplinary team to coordinate field contributions in IECD. By 2003, at least 82 UNICEF country offices had an IECD coordinating mechanism in place. A matrix model is often used to manage resources to support the priority. While this has been quite effective in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, it has also involved significant additional workload for staff.

Conclusions

66. There continues to be strong consensus about the need for UNICEF to support children in the first years of life, but the IECD approach has been difficult to operationalize. The MTR concluded that promoting convergence in the work of intervening agencies is more practical than integration. It also recognized that success in protecting and improving the lives of young children depends heavily on developing capacities of families and communities themselves, including empowering parents to exercise demand for basic services.

67. For the remainder of this MTSP period, there should be a greater emphasis on promoting practical convergence among sector-based interventions, while continuing to stress the holistic needs of children and to promote synergies at the level of families, services and policy. Both partnerships and decentralized planning should be fostered more systematically. There is also a need to determine how UNICEF will contribute more effectively to the Millennium Development Goal for maternal mortality. This, together with nutrition and WES, needs to be made more visible in the work of UNICEF. These conclusions will be considered in the development both of the next MTSP and of a new health and nutrition strategy for UNICEF, which is due to be finalized in 2005.

68. The MTR also concluded that UNICEF should communicate more clearly the importance of strong sectoral programmes for achieving outcomes among young children, including child survival. It should also promote the key role of early learning and child development and the need for coherent approaches and messages in working with families and communities.

69. In view of the short time remaining, it is considered advisable to make only limited changes to the current targets for IECD, based on experience to date. For the remaining MTSP period, is recommended that target 1 be changed to focus on support to frameworks to guide the various policies that affect young children, rather than on promotion of a single comprehensive policy. The target will also reflect UNICEF advocacy for an adequate emphasis on young child survival, growth, development and protection in PRSPs and SWAps. Amendments are proposed to target 2 on basic services access and target 5 on community child care, particularly to increase the focus on disadvantaged groups. The next MTSP should consider adopting a smaller number of indicators relating to young children, formulated in ways which could be more regularly monitored and, where possible, reflecting specific types of country situations.

D. Fighting HIV/AIDS

70. A substantial number of UNICEF offices indicated that the priority for fighting HIV/AIDS is well focused and conceptually clear for both staff and national partners. The plan is seen to have enabled a strategic definition of the UNICEF niche and a more focused response at country level. Under the MTSP, the level of engagement of UNICEF in the fight against AIDS has increased rapidly and substantially at all levels.

71. Since 2001, UNICEF has made major progress in promoting and supporting national situation analyses on children and HIV/AIDS and in engaging countries on issues related to young people and HIV prevention. In the prevention of mother-to-

child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), five countries have established national programmes and another 26 are in the process of scaling them up. However, 11 high-prevalence countries and many more affected countries are not yet scaling up their PMTCT programmes.

72. During 2003, national strategies were in place or under development in an estimated 64 countries for the comprehensive care of HIV-infected children and their families. UNICEF is now procuring anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs for PMTCT and treatment in more than 25 countries. Care and support activities were incorporated into community-based programmes for orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), including through collaboration with faith-based organizations. Since 2003, UNICEF has served as a global convener and leader on issues related to OVCs and, together with USAID, is leading rapid assessments in 17 highly-affected countries.

73. UNICEF works with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on HIV/AIDS in Emergencies. Its actions in these situations have included advocacy, prevention and response to sexual violence and exploitation, prevention of HIV among young people, and the protection of orphans and separated children.

74. Partnerships between United Nations agencies around HIV/AIDS are extensive but need greater coordination. The CCA/UNDAF and United Nations theme groups are important mechanisms, and UNICEF is working with the World Bank to achieve a more strategic partnership for OVC. At country level, the "three ones" concept (one agreed HIV/AIDS action framework, one national AIDS coordinating authority and one agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system) is providing an important framework for increased efficiency.

Organizational response

75. Despite notable increases at all levels since 2000, the resources available to UNICEF to combat HIV/AIDS remain inadequate. Globally, 9 per cent of programme funds were spent on HIV/AIDS in both 2002 and 2003, compared with the target of 14 per cent by 2005. The supply function has become essential to this priority area, and includes procurement on behalf of Governments and non-government organizations (NGOs), continuous monitoring of sources and prices of ARVs and support for their distribution. UNICEF standing offers exist for ARV medicines and rapid diagnostics, in line with WHO testing and treatment guidelines. However, UNICEF lacks a clear programme policy in support of providing ARV treatments, which has constrained the scaling-up of the UNICEF response in some programmes.

76. During the first half of the plan, communication activities were based on individual initiatives such as the HIV and young people web site (www.youthandhiv.org) and the work of UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors. UNICEF will now aim towards a more integrated campaign for OVCs which covers interventions across all MTSP priority areas and engages partners in putting children and young people at the centre of the response to HIV/AIDS.

77. Research and studies have been conducted on the technical, operational and policy dimensions of HIV/AIDS, contributing significantly to performance in this area. Examples include a six-country study of the faith-based response to OVCs in sub-Saharan Africa and major global publications which have been effective in

bringing greater attention to orphans. Although there has been progress in indicator development and research — an estimated 74 countries have monitoring mechanisms in place or under development — there is a lack of systematic data collection on the epidemic. UNICEF field reporting has been hampered by the lack of direct connection between the targets of the MTSP and the wider, impact-oriented targets of the 2001 General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

78. Many national information systems cannot yet support the reporting requirements of global goals and national programmes. For example, data collection has become more challenging as pilot PMTCT projects are expanded to a national scale. UNICEF and other international agencies need to assist in strengthening these information systems so that monitoring and evaluation are able to support quality improvement and programme development. PMTCT monitoring should be integrated within existing health information systems to avoid unnecessary calls on resources.

79. UNICEF staffing for the HIV/AIDS priority has improved at headquarters and regional levels, but remain limited in most country offices. HIV/AIDS has also taken a significant toll on the staff of UNICEF and other agencies. The UNICEF "HIV in the workplace" initiative aims to provide an open work environment for employees who seek testing, care and support and is serving as a model for the United Nations system.

Conclusions

80. The MTR found that the MTSP has provided a clear, strategic framework for the current period and has helped to spur the response to the crisis both by UNICEF and national authorities. UNICEF regional offices have played a key role in accelerating action. However, the global context for pursuing this priority has changed considerably since 2001 and there have also been significant variations in approach across regions.

81. The MTR has confirmed a unique role for UNICEF in promoting a partnership response to orphans and vulnerable children. It has also pointed to the need for a revised approach to working with young people. This should go beyond a narrow focus on reducing individual risk behaviour by addressing the needs of young people for information, skills and services. It should also promote underlying factors which reduce their vulnerability to HIV, such as connectedness to family, school and community. The review also found a lack of clarity and progress on care and support to children living with HIV. By forging stronger links to the various new international initiatives, UNICEF can be more effective in future in advocating for treatment for millions of infected children, young people and women and in supporting Governments to increase access.

82. Based on these findings, the MTR recommended that UNICEF adopt a modified approach to this priority area, focusing on three core interventions: the scaling-up of protection and support for OVCs as the centrepiece in countries with high HIV prevalence, backed by a major communication campaign; prevention among young people; and a new area of care and support that incorporates, among other interventions, both PMTCT-Plus and treatment for HIV-positive children and their families. Due to the wide variations in conditions, the three core interventions would need to be implemented flexibly, on the basis of regional strategies, country analysis and national priorities. A reformulated care, treatment and support focus

area would promote the synergy between PMTCT and treatment regimes and reduce the risk of parallel efforts. This recommendation has important implications, given that the logistical and technical demands of ARV treatment programmes are daunting.

83. UNICEF should now consider elevating its accountabilities beyond those originally established for this priority. During 2004-2005, UNICEF will undertake a collaborative process to identify feasible outcome- and impact-level indicators in line with the General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, the Plan of Action of the Special Session on Children and the Millennium Development Goals. An incremental approach is proposed, with a more significant shift towards out-come and impact-level results in the next plan. UNICEF should also consider the need to monitor the inclusion of HIV/AIDS in such major national policy instruments as PRSPs.

84. Meanwhile, several modifications to the current plan are proposed. Targets and indicators for PMTCT and treatment of infected children will be incorporated into a broader target for care, treatment and support for children and families living with HIV/AIDS. Additional outcome-level indicators will be adopted in the areas of knowledge for prevention among young people, school attendance among orphans, and care of children and families living with HIV/AIDS.

E. Child protection

85. The MTR indicated that the child protection approach of the MTSP is generally seen to be clear and has helped to raise protection issues on the agendas of Governments and other partners. A growing number of UNICEF-assisted programmes have incorporated actions to support legislative reform (including the reform of juvenile justice systems, legislation to prevent and punish trafficking, and protection for war-affected children); actions to prevent exploitation of children, including child labour; studies to break the silence around contentious issues; and capacity-building with legal, health and social work professionals. The "protective environment" framework, introduced in 2002, has helped to strengthen advocacy work and to orient capacity-building approaches at country level.

86. The incorporation of emergencies into the child protection priority of the MTSP needs to be strengthened, in line with the revised CCCs. However, during the first half of the plan period, increased attention was given to approaches for reinforcing the family as the first line of defence for children in crisis, and to the strengthening of legal and policy frameworks. There was also increased recognition of the protection needs of children in emergencies among United Nations agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross movement.

87. There has been a notable expansion of partnerships. The potential impact of alliances with parliamentarians, religious leaders and the private sector is more fully recognized, particularly given the sociocultural sensitivities which are often involved. CCAs have increasingly addressed issues of discrimination and vulnerability, and the UNDAF has enabled consideration of violence prevention, juvenile justice and judicial reform.

Organizational response

88. Child protection expenditure ranged from 9-11 per cent of total UNICEF programme spending between 2000 and 2003, in line with the MTSP target. As with other priorities, the declining share of regular resources in total UNICEF income has an impact on organizational capacity. Many child protection posts are funded from short-term sources. However, all regional offices now have child protection advisory posts.

89. Protection from violence, exploitation and abuse is recognized as a complex area requiring both response to victims and efforts at multiple levels to prevent harm to children. UNICEF needs to make further efforts to communicate its approach, including the emphasis on long-term changes in the protective environment, the staff-intensive nature of protection work and the corresponding funding requirements.

90. During the first half of the plan period, this priority benefited from increased research and evaluation work and considerable communications support, notably through major events and regular media contacts.

Conclusions

91. The MTR found child protection to be an increasingly well-performing area, particularly in the area of policy and legal reform. Nonetheless, many UNICEF offices indicated that the priority needs greater focus. There is still a lack of documentation on successful programmes as a basis for taking approaches to scale. UNICEF needs to build on its recent progress and establish itself further as a knowledge hub and authoritative voice in child protection. Gaps should be addressed through a well-structured research agenda, a common indicator system and greater sharing of experiences between regions.

92. In the remainder of this MTSP period, UNICEF will aim to finalize the protective environment framework which has begun to assist in the shift away from small projects towards an emphasis on broader systemic change, and will develop guidance on a core set of indicators for measuring change. UNICEF will aim to extend the partnership base for child protection and to develop a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy based on a demonstration of how innovative efforts can lead to policy change.

93. Some child protection targets are not yet adequately focused, and some of the original MTSP indicators have been found to be inappropriate or impractical. Targets in the next plan will need to be more easily measurable. For the remainder of the current plan period, it is recommended that target 1 be narrowed to concentrate on indicator development work in the areas of violence, children in formal care and juvenile justice. Target 2 relating to the strengthening of national standards for children not in family care should focus on juvenile justice and children without caregivers. Indicators have been revised for the other targets.

94. Given the wide range of concerns, the next plan may need to more clearly identify child protection issues that UNICEF will address mainly through advocacy and research as distinct from direct programme cooperation. The MTR findings also suggest that tackling discrimination should not be solely a child protection concern and that the next MTSP should also consider interventions to prevent discrimination in other sectors. Identifying targets and well-focused interventions for addressing violence against children will be a major challenge.

IV. Assessment of supporting strategies for the plan

95. Based on external documentation reviews carried out in 2003 and 2004 and field consultations undertaken for the MTR, it is evident that the application of a **human rights-based approach to programming** as envisaged by the MTSP has been uneven. So far, roughly one half of all UNICEF-assisted country programmes show good or adequate application of the approach. Most country programmes initiated within the current MTSP period have clearly adopted such an approach, and many are supporting national capacity-building activities in this area. Major factors contributing to the use of the approach have included regional leadership, intercountry exchanges, intensive training of staff and effective communication with partners.

96. Regional emphasis has differed. One of the leading regions has focused on supporting reforms in social policies and legislative frameworks. In another, the emphasis has been on building community and family capacities, including as a strategy to address HIV/AIDS and malaria. Child protection and the reduction of maternal mortality have provided entry points for the use of a human rights-based approach to programming in other regions.

97. The positive effects of this strategy are apparent in many recently approved country programmes. These include: a stronger focus on addressing various forms of discrimination and exclusion; a more frequent use of recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on national reports; widespread initiatives for the reform of child-related legislation, although these have not extended sufficiently beyond child protection; and the use of human rights principles in setting programme goals.

98. As part of a human rights-based approach to programming, there has also been notable growth during the MTSP period in the promotion by UNICEF of participation in the development process by families, communities, young people and girls. There are good and fairly widespread examples in all priority areas of the plan, except for immunization "plus". Sustaining the practice of participation remains a major challenge.

99. Areas of weaker progress were also identified. Gender equality and women's rights are not systematically included as key components of the approach. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and its reporting process are not used to inform UNICEF-assisted programmes to the same extent as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is also scope for advocacy for children in public policies and budgets, and for promoting accountability in basic services and the rights of children to have their views taken into account in decisions which affect them.

100. The MTR found that attention to gender equality concerns and the use of **gender mainstreaming** as a strategy in UNICEF-assisted programmes continue to be uneven. The girls' education priority has provided a range of opportunities for promoting interventions to benefit girls and to raise issues of gender disparity. The protection of women and girls from violence, especially in emergency situations, has also received greater emphasis in UNICEF work. However, concerns were raised about the inadequate focus on the role of women, girls and gender discrimination in programmes to combat HIV/AIDS and other priority areas. While UNICEF support to national reporting on the two Conventions has been used as an opportunity to

promote improved monitoring of both children's and women's rights, further clarity is needed on the role of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in the work of UNICEF.

101. More needs to be done to develop capacities for the use and monitoring of a human rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming. Further investments are needed in training at the operational level, development of good practices across sectors, sharing of experience and improved programming tools for use in both regular and emergency situations. These measures will promote more consistent practices and help to maintain the UNICEF contribution in these areas with national partners and to the international system. A tool for gender assessment of programmes was issued in 2004 and a synthesis is being produced of potential lessons from recent field studies on the human rights-based approach to programming.

102. There is also a need to forge stronger consensus within United Nations country teams and with the international financial institutions on the use of a human rights-based approach to programming, building on the provisions of the Secretary-General's reform agenda and the common understanding adopted by the UNDG in this area in 2003. The growing number of countries which have adopted national plans of action on human rights provides a further opportunity for United Nations agencies to support progress on issues affecting children's rights.

103. **Results-based planning and management** supports the MTSP strategy for programme excellence and is seen as a growing strength. In the context of United Nations reform efforts, some field offices report that the relative strengths of UNICEF in this area have contributed to a better recognition of priorities for children within the UNDAF. The UNDAF itself, including its results matrix, is helping to establish a more rigorous approach to programming, monitoring and evaluation among members of United Nations country teams. However, challenges continue to be experienced in the use of the agreed concepts and terminology of results-based planning and management and in the formulation of well-defined annual objectives. The next MTSP should also reflect the importance of collaborating with United Nations and national partners to incorporate vulnerability analysis within the CCA and emergency response within the UNDAF.

104. An annual average of 1,203 studies, surveys and evaluations were reported by UNICEF country offices in 2002-2003, of which 28 per cent were evaluations. This compares to an average of 995 such activities in 2000-2001, suggesting a significant increase in **research and evaluation** activity during the first half of the MTSP period.

105. Analysis suggests that over 80 per cent of UNICEF country-based research and evaluation efforts since 2002 are directly related to the priorities or strategies of the plan. Areas of exceptional growth or sustained investment include: education programming for girls and other disadvantaged populations; HIV/AIDS; family and community care practices and early learning; safe motherhood and morbidity-mortality surveys; and almost all elements of child protection. However, there have been low levels of research and evaluation work on children in conflict and some areas of health, and in such areas as advocacy, communication, human resources and fund-raising.

106. Based on the findings of the MTR and the recent progress report on evaluation in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2004/11), a more explicit monitoring and evaluation plan should form part of the next MTSP. This is needed to provide a guiding and supportive framework for UNICEF work in these areas, as well for improved results-based and performance-related monitoring and reporting.

107. There was broad agreement among UNICEF offices that the MTSP priorities have helped to strengthen **partnership development, programme communication and advocacy**. UNICEF offices also noted a greater focus on capacity-building with the media and confirmed the importance of the UNICEF emphasis on data-driven communication and advocacy, using such tools as *DevInfo*.

108. UNICEF field offices indicated that the MTSP has helped them to communicate the comparative advantages of UNICEF and to project it as a well-focused organization. This has been particularly important in accelerating progress in fighting HIV/AIDS and child protection. National Committees confirmed that the clearer priorities of the MTSP have made it easier to communicate the UNICEF focus on results for children.

109. The MTR also confirmed a rapid diversification of partnerships with civil society. These relationships are now widely recognized by UNICEF and national partners as essential for increasing the coverage of programmes among very poor families and for bringing local innovations to a wider scale. UNICEF offices are also increasingly playing a role in facilitating government and civil society to come together to address such issues as HIV/AIDS prevention, trafficking and violence against children.

110. Despite these trends, it is felt that a more explicit focus by the corporate plan on the Millennium Development Goals and the goals adopted by the Special Session on Children would provide UNICEF with a stronger platform from which to build partnerships for children. UNICEF offices believe that much more could be done on the basis of this platform to mobilize the resident coordinator system on children's issues and to work for child-related results with the private sector.

111. As it moves into the next MTSP period, UNICEF should seek to give a stronger voice to children themselves and to promote the "child's face" which is inherent in the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals, as well as its own brand and comparative strengths. The MTR also found that UNICEF needs to improve the definition and evidence base of its communication strategies. A communication plan will be developed to include activities at all levels of the organization and will focus on a few major themes each year, within the MTSP framework.

V. Management and operations

Table 1
Selected organizational performance indicators[a]

Indicator	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*
	Per cent		
Programme expenditure rate (expenditure/allotment)	92	91	93
Outstanding cash assistance rate (percentage outstanding for more than 9 months, at end-year)	9.9	5.8	4.8
Audit recommendations: percentage closed by 1 July of following year	68	73	82
Audited country offices which have a staff training plan		45[b]	88

[a] Performance indicators were also reported in the Executive Director's annual report (E/ICEF/2004/9).
[b] 2001 and 2002 are combined.

112. Since the inception of the plan period, **programme expenditure** rates have remained at levels, just over 90 per cent, which are considered to be acceptably high (see table 1). Very few country programmes have registered expenditure levels persistently below 85 per cent. However, there remains some tendency for expenditures to be "bunched" in the final quarter of the calendar year.

113. Major progress has been made in the MTSP period in reducing the proportion of cash assistance to country programme partners which is outstanding for more than 9 months. The rate has fallen by half, to under 5 per cent.

114. As shown in table 1, most UNICEF field offices now take timely and complete action to address the recommendations of **internal audits**. However, audits in 2002 and 2003 found that field offices continue to have weaknesses in some areas where UNICEF is committed to improve practices during the MTSP period. About three quarters of audited offices had weaknesses in the development of annual project plans and a majority needed to improve their planning for monitoring and evaluation. Based on a sample audit, support by regional offices to country programme development and emergency response was found to be generally positive. However, there were notable weaknesses in regional support to country programme implementation and operations, which are gradually being addressed in 2003-2004.

115. A "future search" exercise of the UNICEF **supply function** carried out in association with the MTR explored strategic directions for the next MTSP. The role of the supply function has already changed significantly since 2001. Emergency response has become increasingly complex, while the needs for preparedness planning have increased. There is an increased demand for health and education supplies at the local level. UNICEF will increasingly need to offer support to decentralized programming and supply management. Current conditions also call for increased alliances, long-term demand forecasts, new evaluation standards and demonstration of results.

116. The increased scale of local procurement, the establishment of zonal offices and the pre-positioning of emergency stocks were identified by UNICEF field offices as recent factors contributing to organizational performance and the implementation of the MTSP priorities. The direct ordering option has accelerated the offshore procurement process for many life-saving commodities. Quality control efforts have been valuable in strengthening standards for commodities from an increasing number of suppliers.

117. Despite these strengths, UNICEF has not yet established adequate technical support to field offices in applying results-based management to the supply function. Stronger technical support is needed, in some countries, for local procurement and distribution. The supply function also needs to more clearly define how it can work in support of SWAps and joint programmes.

118. The foremost consideration for the future is a continued commitment to ethics and excellence. UNICEF will continue to set norms and adhere to global quality standards for products and processes. The supply function will also need to: (a) prepare for strategic decentralization of procurement; (b) consider the complete supply chain, with stronger support to national capacity development; (c) promote the availability of essential commodities for children and families, including in the context of SWAps, PRSPs and expenditure plans; and (d) focus more on inter-agency collaboration based on harmonized and simplified procedures, such as a common United Nations information technology (IT) system that offers e-business.

119. **HR capacity** at both country and regional levels was the most widespread area of concern in the MTR related to management and operations for implementation of the MTSP. While this is linked in part to the overall availability and composition of contributions to UNICEF, strategic HR planning is not seen as having been sufficiently timely or comprehensive. Challenges in the timely recruitment of staff for both regular and emergency positions were noted as a factor affecting performance.

120. Nearly all field offices identified gaps in technical competencies, including for IECD and child protection, as well as in operational areas. While 88 per cent of country offices audited in 2003 were found to have a staff training plan compared to 45 per cent in 2001-2002, serious weaknesses remain in the assessment of learning needs and impact.

121. A corporate strategic HR planning process is due to come into effect in 2004-2005 and will feed into preparations for the next MTSP. It will be important to develop a more comprehensive HR work plan, including projected staff requirements, learning needs and standards and competency profiles which are linked more explicitly to the MTSP priorities. It is also intended that HR, as well as other operational functions, will in future be more fully integrated in all stages of MTSP formulation, implementation and monitoring. Meanwhile, many of the specific HR initiatives undertaken during the present period are likely to be relevant to the needs of future organizational plans.

122. **IT development** has supported the organization in the current plan period by enabling the integration of IT with business processes, providing innovative, effective and secure business information solutions and systems. Some 179 offices worldwide are now connected to the UNICEF global network and over 21 million e-mails travelled through the system in 2003. The 79 million hits in 2003 on

www.unicef.org suggest that the Internet is now being used much more effectively as an advocacy tool to help communicate the mission and accomplishments of UNICEF. In terms of challenges, field offices note that enhancements are needed in key systems to assist in monitoring and reporting on results.

Table 2
Estimated programme expenditures by priority area, 2000, 2002-2003

	2000	*2002*	*2003*	*MTSP projected for 2005*	*2000*	*2002*	*2003*	*MTSP target for 2005*
Priority area	*In millions of United States dollars*				*Percentage*			
Girls' education	131	201	233	193	15	19	19	16
Immunization-"plus"	261	260	260	289	30	25	22	24
IECD	293	302	440	326	33	29	36	27
HIV/AIDS	30	96	111	169	3	9	9	14
Child protection	78	117	123	121	9	11	10	10
Other	92	69	41	108	10	7	3	9
	885	**1 044**	**1 208**	**1 206**				

123. The MTSP (E/ICEF/2001/13, para. 150) envisaged that much of the growth in programme spending would be in the area of HIV/AIDS. Expenditures on girls' education and child protection were expected to grow at roughly the same rate as overall expenditure, and thus to maintain their shares. Table 2 above indicates that mid-way through the plan period there was a rapid increase in both the level and share of programme expenditure on HIV/AIDS. Child protection has so far maintained its share as planned. Girls' education has increased its share beyond what was originally planned, based in part on a significant increase in regular resources allocations linked to an acceleration strategy. The share of the IECD priority has fluctuated significantly, due mainly to emergency-related contributions.

124. In order to meet the projected expenditures and shares for the remainder of the plan period, funding for HIV/AIDS will need to continue the strong growth achieved since 2000. Significant growth will also be required for immunization "plus".

125. In contrast to overall funding levels, trends in the composition of available financial resources are a constraint to organizational performance and progress towards the MTSP targets. Of greatest concern are the decline in regular resources relative to other resources; the impact of this decline on the availability of secure funding for key technical posts which are needed to support the plan priorities, and on core headquarters capacities; an increasing trend towards emergency other resources, which are usually very short term; and the limited availability of thematic funding.

126. Spending on immunization "plus" in recent years has been exceptionally dependent on non-core resources. In 2003, some 83 per cent of spending on immunization "plus" was from other resources, as was two thirds of programme spending for both child protection and IECD.

VI. The 2002-2005 plan: overall conclusions

127. The MTR has pointed to a number of strengths in the current MTSP which it is recommended that UNICEF seek to retain in future. These include: the overall emphasis on clear organizational priorities, coupled with a flexible approach that responds to national conditions; an increased emphasis on results-based management; dynamic linkages among the priorities and between community-based and policy-oriented work; and a more coherent and thematic approach to external communication and fund-raising. Field offices also emphasized the importance of networking on lessons learned and of expanded partnerships with civil society and faith-based organizations for scaling up interventions.

128. UNICEF field offices, Executive Board members and National Committees concurred in envisaging only limited adjustments to the current MTSP. Short-term adjustments to the targets and emphases of the current organizational priorities have been laid out in earlier sections of this report.

129. Other areas of emphasis for the remainder of the current cycle have been identified. UNICEF will seek to communicate its contributions to the Millennium Agenda more explicitly and will continue to clarify its intended areas of excellence in the lead-up to the next plan. There is also a clear need to increase the timeliness of recruitment and staff assignment.

130. The review has confirmed that UNICEF should further specify its role in supporting the development and implementation of PRSPs and SWAps. The links between the MTSP and the international human rights framework should also be made more explicit, in order for the plan to be more effective in supporting UNICEF advocacy related to exclusion and discrimination affecting both children and women. The MTR also reaffirmed the commitment of UNICEF to making effective contributions to harmonized and simplified procedures within the United Nations system, and to closer collaboration with other United Nations agencies, including on the application of a rights-based approach.

Implications for the next plan

131. Most UNICEF staff and a number of external partners envisaged a high degree of continuity in the main organizational priorities for the next plan. Although there exists strong evidence that the IECD approach is difficult to operationalize, it is also clear that young child survival and development will need to be addressed in some form in the next MTSP as part of the core business of UNICEF. A strong rationale has emerged for the girls' education priority to place greater emphasis on quality education and wider issues of inequality. It is also widely felt that the structure of the next plan should enable UNICEF work in the areas of water, sanitation and nutrition to be more clearly reflected and reported on. The intended contributions of the plan to the Millennium Development Goals should be more easily evident, and the results framework of the plan should be expanded to incorporate key indicators of organizational performance, improved indicators for results monitoring and strategic evaluations.

132. Areas for possible expansion of the existing business of UNICEF were also identified by the review. Among these was a greater involvement in support to social and economic policy formulation, e.g., seeking to influence budgetary trends based

on cogent arguments for investing in children. There were related suggestions to develop targets and standards to guide UNICEF advocacy and support for social policies and basic service programmes, based on human rights treaties. This could lead to a stronger role in promoting good governance in the interests of the most disadvantaged families and children, including orphans. The participation of young people, as well as violence prevention, were also seen as future concerns.

133. The MTR found strong consensus that emergency response should be explicitly reflected in the targets and results framework for the next plan. This would include the incorporation of activities resulting from the revised CCCs within each priority area. The option of a separate organizational priority for emergency response should also be reviewed. Work in post-conflict transitions is seen as a significant strategic area for UNICEF in the next plan period, in addition to its continuing role in humanitarian response.

134. Major changes identified to improve organizational performance in the context of the next plan were: further streamlining of programming and operational procedures; strengthening the technical capabilities of UNICEF staff to support the plan priorities; the recruitment and retention of high-quality staff; and the development of an aggressive fund-raising strategy, with a particular focus on ensuring a healthy balance between regular and other resources. There was also consensus that UNICEF will need a firm strategy for communicating the plan itself, both internally and to external audiences.

135. Lastly, the MTR concluded that UNICEF should aim to strengthen its role as a global knowledge centre for children. The review highlighted the importance of information and learning in pursuing the MTSP priorities, and the need for more rapid validation and dissemination of good practices. The promotion of relevant research, and good use of the results, will further underscore the strategic role of UNICEF in support of global action for children.